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January 5, 1972

CONFIDENTIAL

J. Owen Zurhellen, Jr., Esq.
American Embassy
Tel Aviv

Dear Owen:

Before departing on leave, Stack asked me to convey to you the substance of our latest consultations within the Department concerning the Liberty.

No one has any problem with the suggestion made in your letter to Stack of November 9 to drop the word "technical" from our proposal to the Israelis to initiate discussions aimed at settling the Liberty claim. Whatever wording you decide to use at this stage should, however, allow for the Department's objective of inducing the Israelis to accept bilateral talks with a view toward obtaining an expeditious settlement and payment. In this regard, we would not wish to intimate any readiness on our part to agree to the previously expressed Israeli concept of a "nominal" settlement.

Sincerely,

J. Thomas McAndrew
Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs

NEA/IAI:GRCella:cf
1/5/72 22030

Clearances:
L/NEA:SBoyd (SB (conc))
L/C:DRHenderson, Jr./FAKwiatek (DRH (conc)) (FAK (conc))
NEA:ALAtherton, Jr. (draft)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Tel Aviv, Israel

November 9, 1971

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. H. H. Stackhouse
Country Director
Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Stack:

I held your letter of October 19 on the Liberty to have a chance to see whether the Ambassador had any new ideas on his return.

I will be glad to go back to Michael and try to start things going again. However, I think that they will have a real objection to starting "technical" talks. If the talks are called "technical," it would seem natural that it will be "technicians" who will do the talking and the subject matter will have to be the question of how much damage was done to the Liberty and how much the U. S. loss amounted to. Once the GOI agrees in principle to this kind of "technical" talks, there would be a certain element of commitment to basing the final claim on the results of what the technicians discuss.

If you and the others in the Department agree, therefore, I would propose to drop the "technical" and simply propose to the Israelis that we initiate discussions. If we have to qualify the discussions in some way, I would like to call them "working level" which would have no connotations for the basis on which the settlement is to be made.

Please let me know and I will go ahead.

With all best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

J. Owen Zurhellen, Jr.

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